

Onan the illiterate, or the Revenge of the Aesthetic
(Philosophy as Art and the Artist-Philosopher)

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

Onan the illiterate is primarily an experimental writing project, a project making more use of philosophy than literature as its source material. As a post-poststructuralist experiment, this project emphasizes the aesthetic over the logocentric; unlike poststructuralism, however, *Onan the illiterate* actually enacts what it proposes—it defies the logocentric.

Relating to a character from the Old Testament, “Onan” refers to both coitus interruptus and masturbation. These are very important features of my work and its “revenge” on logocentrism. Coitus interruptus intervenes the properly discursive as ignorance and confusion, while masturbation conveys the affective pleasure of artistic practice. Against the banality of logocentrism (its overdependence on understanding, meaning and interpretation, its overdetermination with regard to teleological argumentation and instrumental ratiocination), Onan flaunts its “illiteracy” for nothing other than the sake of pleasure.

Importantly, I define philosophy as the art of thought. Unlike properly constituted thought (poststructuralism included), *Onan the illiterate* experiments with style in such a way as to disturb the propositional and the argumentative. In this way, not only is experimental philosophy undermined, but also academia and its much-beloved art theory. Not only does the dissertation engage the inadequacies of logocentrism in discussing *Onan the illiterate* as a project, then, but it also confronts these very inadequacies as they relate to academia, philosophy and the dissertation itself.

Note on Style

The following dissertation sets out to enact exactly what the title states—a revenge of the aesthetic. However, it must be noted that this revenge of the aesthetic is upon nothing other than logocentrism. As you will notice, logocentrism is the target of both this dissertation and my creative work, *Onan the illiterate*. It remains to be explained how this dissertation differs from my creative writing. From a proper perspective, this dissertation is not normal; but, then again, one must realize that this dissertation is not only written by an artist, but part of a creative doctorate (Doctor of Creative Arts). This is important. Having said that, I do not believe that this dissertation is any less rigorous than a proper dissertation. And, by the way, what counts as proper and why so? These and similar issues are crucial and will be dealt with in the following. Allow me to explain, briefly, the main difference between this dissertation and my creative writing: the following dissertation struggles with—without abandoning—its own logocentrism. That is, it remains logocentric; it is, like the proper dissertation, predominantly argumentative and propositional. This is the ultimate difference between the style of the following dissertation (which, in all actuality, is quite proper) and the style of my creative writing (which defies argumentation and the propositional—at least insofar as the propositional is truthful in its claims to correspondence). In addition to formal style, the tone of the following is of interest: an aggression confused with its own hilarity. Trust nothing. Also, you will find that the following dissertation employs gendered pronouns, whereas my creative writing does not. This is simply for the sake of academic convenience (I, personally, have no interest in gendered pronouns unless gender is the object of discussion—which it usually isn't). And, finally, it might be worthwhile to mention the process involved in the writing of this dissertation. I am sure that you will notice the performative character of the text. This is so because the dissertation was improvised. That is, there was no attempt at properly outlining what was to be argued beforehand. The process of my thought is very important to me, and I will not exclude my dissertation from that interest.

Regarding the presentation of *Onan the illiterate* that follows this dissertation, page numbers are only for the sake of scholarly examination.

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Life is no argument. Nietzsche

There are no arguments. Cioran

Logic is always false. Tzara

Literacy is always feigned. Onan